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REPORT
OF THE
OTTAWA RECEPTION COMMITTEE
ON THE
FLAG INCIDENT
ON BOARD THE STEAMER "QUEEN."

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STANLEY A. REEFER COMMITTEE

THE INCIDENT

RECEIVED
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REPORT
OF THE OTTAWA RECEPTION COMMITTEE
ON THE
FLAC INCIDENT
ON BOARD THE STEAMER "QUEEN."

The members of the Ottawa Reception Committee of the Papal Zouaves made studious investigation on the incident of the flag, on board the Steamer *Queen*, on the 2nd instant, which has been so much talked of and written upon, for their own satisfaction, and with the intent of answering the unjust accusations of want of loyalty levied against their friends. They had, however, almost determined to refrain from publishing the result of the inquest and had taken the decision of leaving matters as they stood, to the good sense of the Community, especially since the Directors of the Ottawa Navigation Company had, in an official document, acquitted the Zouaves of *intentional disrespect* towards the British flag, informed the public that Captain Simmonds was to be admonished to exercise, in future, temper and forbearance, in dealing with passengers, and expressed their opinion that he, Captain Simmonds, had acted hastily and indiscreetly on the occasion.

But, on noticing the constant repetition of the erroneous statements of the affair, the constant insulting remarks made against the Zouaves, and the endorsement and commendation, by a certain number of Citizens, of the conduct of Captain Simmonds, in spite of the decision given by the Directors, who cannot, for a minute, be suspected of partiality to our friends, or of antipathy and hostility towards Captain Simmonds, the members of the Reception Committee have decided to publish the result of their inquiry, as a matter of right and of duty imposed upon them.

The occurrence was first the subject of newspaper arti-

cles, of Press correspondence and telegraphic reports. These were to the effect that, in coming up the river to Ottawa, the Zouaves had forcibly hoisted a party flag, and had exasperated, by disloyal and insulting vociferations, peaceable passengers; that on their return trip they had lowered the British Ensign from the stern pole of the steamer *Queen*, and that, on being expostulated with by Captain Simmonds, they had assaulted him to prevent him from navigating his vessel under Her Majesty's Colours.

Of all this not a word is true; but it has been circulated from one end of the Country to the other; and, now that it is proved, beyond a shadow of doubt, to have been a fabrication, it is still made an argument against the Zouaves, for a purpose, transparent enough, not to necessitate its specific mention.

The facts are that the Zouaves did not, at any time, lower any flag; that they did not hoist any banner; that they did not insult anybody.

The Zouaves, having decided to make Ottawa the place for their annual social gathering, in July 1877, (where they were received by their friends and the *élite* of the Catholic Society), selected the river as the route to follow. In the agreement made with the Ottawa Navigation Company, it was stipulated that their banner should be hoisted on board the boats conveying the party.

That banner, let it be said, *en passant*, is not an insulting or provoking ensign; it is a religious flag, white in colour, with the emblematic symbol of the Sacred Heart of Our Saviour embroidered on it.

The trip up, on the 30th of June, went off pleasantly on board the steamers *Prince of Wales* and *Peerless*, the Zouaves banner being seen floating on both steamers, in fulfilment of the agreement referred to.

On their return trip, the Zouaves, party embarked on board the *Queen* on the 2nd of July. At the time the steamer left her wharf, about five o'clock in the afternoon, there were flying on the vessel four Flags, — the British Ensign at the stern pole, and three Union Jacks, one at each side and one at the bow.

The Zouaves in charge of the banners inquired where the Commanding Officer was and were shown the Sailing-Master, Mr. Cousineau, in the act of having the boat started. The Zouaves went to that officer, asked him if he had au-

thority to have their banner hoisted on the boat according to agreement with the Company, and added : "You are aware " that this was done on board the *Peerless*, which you met " coming up on Saturday last." The Sailing-Master answered that he knew that and told the Zouaves to procure their banner and that he, the Sailing-Master, would have it hoisted at once. By order of the Sailing-Master, the banner of the Sacred Heart was hoisted at the bow, by a deck hand, who himself took down the flag there before flying. This was done when the vessel was moving.

The deck hand had not gone far to store the Union Jack he had taken down, when he was accosted by Captain Simmonds who ordered him to go back and undo what he had done ; he, Captain Simmonds, at the same time, pushing the deck hand, who refused to obey. Upon which, Captain Simmonds, without speaking to anybody else, snatched the flag from the sailor's hands and rushed to the bow pole near by, pulled down the Zouaves' banner and rehoisted the Union Jack.

The boat was all the time under way and the bulk of the passengers were looking at the shore. M. Martin seems to have been the first or one of the first, among the interested, to notice the proceeding and went to Captain Simmonds, still at the foot of the bow pole, to ask explanation. A gathering then took place at the extreme fore end of the deck and angry words were pronounced, when a cry was heard : "He " has thrown our flag overboard," or words to that effect coming from passengers who had just noticed the banner slipping alongside of the boat and dropping into the river.

The question as to whether the flag went overboard before or after hands had been laid on Captain Simmonds' person, being differently reported, we abstain from taking that point up any further than to note the discrepancy. It was then that Captain Simmonds was threatened with being sent after the banner; threats which could have been carried into execution in few seconds if it had been really meant.

Priests, Zouaves, and other passengers came forward, pacified the infuriated, rescued from those who held him, Captain Simmonds, and accompanied him to his cabin.

At another period of the trip, the Zouaves were offered to hoist another of their flags to the bow pole, which offer they declined, but they allowed one of their flags to be hoisted at the steamer's mast ; their declining to consent to have the Union Jack of the bow pole taken down again was

for the reason that malicious interpretation might have been given to it.

Captain Simmonds had both the Sailing-Master and the deck hand arrested for refusing to obey him and combining to resist his orders. The Sailing-Master was acquitted of all charges and the sailor sentenced to fifteen days jail for disobeying the Captain's orders.

While an investigation being was carried on by the Directors of the Company, his employers and superiors, Captain Simmonds had the delicacy to publish a letter, on his own case. Here is, *in extenso*, Captain Simmonds communication to the press :

" To the Editor of the *Star*,

" Sir.—On leaving Queen's Wharf, Ottawa, on Monday evening last, with a number of Papal Zouaves, I had my ensign hoisted aft and the Union Jack forward in commemoration of Dominion Day, when the Zouaves thought fit to have my Jack hauled down and their own flag hoisted in its place without ever having the courtesy to ask my consent, which would have readily been given. This I consider the greatest insult I have ever received. Seeing one of my men with the Jack under his arm I ordered him to rehoist it, which he blandly refused to do, and was backed in his refusal by my pilot, both of whom I have had arrested, in accordance with the Seamen's extension Act 1873, for breach of discipline. Seeing the state of affairs, I took the flag from him and hoisted it myself, and to prevent the Papal flag from blowing overboard, put my foot upon it whilst hoisting the Jack. The moment my flag was at the masthead some thirty or forty of the Zouaves seized me by the throat in a most unwarrantable and brutal manner directly under the flag from which I claim protection, and which as long as I have breath in me I will never allow to be insulted ; not content with this, they threatened to pitch me overboard, and I believe would have carried their threat into execution had not Mr. Colin Campbell, of the Civil Service, a priest and a French gentleman, (whom I beg to thank sincerely) come to my rescue, whilst not one of my contemptible crew stirred to lend me a helping hand. I cannot speak to highly of the conduct of those gentlemen who assisted me and enabled me to get to my cabin, where I was advised by a friendly priest to remain, but I am not in the habit of showing the white feather, and will always endeavor to do my duty, and be at my post come what may. I am falsely accused of having deliberately thrown the 'Zouaves' flag overboard. I deny most emphatically having done so, as I had intended returning it to them had they not prevented me by their interference, by which they themselves lost their flag, for the moment they hauled me away, the flag being free blew over the side, a circumstance I sincerely regret. Another assertion they make, which is equally false, is that this action on my part was premeditated. I am sure nothing was farther from my thoughts. I have no animosity against any man, class or religious sect ; I believe every one has a right to worship God according to the dictates of his conscience, therefore it was no hatred or ill-feeling prompted me to act as I did. I felt what occurred was a gross insult, and only did what in my opinion I was perfectly justified in doing, and what I think any other British subject who had any spark of loyalty in him would have done, if I acted wrongly I am sorry for it, but I feel I only did my duty,

and I am sure that the flag which was so unwarrantably insulted will always protect me and Her Majesty's loyal subjects.

Your very respectfully,

T. SIMMONDS."

On this statement of Captain Simmonds, we have to make the following remarks :

On leaving the Queen's wharf, Captain Simmonds had no flag hoisted—the four flags then flying had been in their respective places since morning and they were hoisted by order of the Sailing-Master.

The Zouaves did not think fit to have Captain Simmonds' *Jack* hauled down, but simply, and politely asked from an officer of the boat to give effect to an agreement made with the Company.

It will be remarked that Captain Simmonds, who, at the beginning of his letter, takes the matter to be personal, and in which his own authority or dignity was insulted, ends it by representing the affair as a question of *loyalty*, asserting that Her Majesty's Colours had been "unwarrantably insulted" and representing himself as the champion who defended them.

Of that act which he calls an unwarrantable insult to the British flag, Captain Simmonds says, in another part of his letter, that if he had been only asked to allow it, he would have readily given his consent.

With these few remarks, we abandon, to the analysis of every impartial and intelligent reader, Captain Simmonds' communication, in which he pleasantly asserts that "*some thirty or forty of the Zouaves seized me (him) by the throat.*"

The Directors of the Ottawa Navigation Company had an investigation of the incident and have published the following report of the affair :

"At a special meeting of the Directors of the Ottawa River Navigation Company held at the Company's Office this day, to investigate the difficulty that occurred on board the steamer *Queen Victoria*, on July 2nd, the following report was adopted :

"1.—The Zouaves were wrong in applying to the pilot instead of to the Captain, for permission to hoist their flag, as they had done on their voyage up on two other of the Company's steamers.

"2.—The pilot, Cousineau, exceeded his authority in disturbing the steamer's flags without the permission of the Captain, who was on duty at the gangway receiving passengers.

"3.—The Captain alone has, by law, the undoubted right to order the position and arrangements of flags on his ship, and the vessel being dressed for

a national holiday, it was not unnatural that he should object to changes being made without consulting him.

"4.—In the opinion of the Directors the Captain acted hastily and indiscreetly in lowering the flag of the Sacred Heart without first remonstrating with the chief of the excursion party on the impropriety that had been committed.

"5.—But such hasty action could not justify the violent assault made on him by a number of his passengers.

"6.—Both the Captain and the pilot state in writing that the former, while rehoisting the Union Jack, kept his foot on the flag of the Sacred Heart, which the captain says he did to prevent its being blown overboard. During the succeeding scuffle he could not maintain that position, and the flag was consequently blown away and lost.

"7.—It does not appear that the captain's action was taken on any other ground than the maintenance of his lawful authority on board his vessel, for according to the statement of Mr. Martin, General Vice-President of the Union Allet, published in *La Minerve*, he afterwards consented to let the Pontifical flag be hoisted on the mainmast.

"The Directors, while they regret the infortunate *contre-temps* that has taken place, do not consider that the conduct of Captain Simmonds deserves further remarks from them than an admonition to exercise, in future, temper and forbearance in dealing with passengers.

"The pilot will be enjoined in future to restrict himself to the duties of his office, and they hope that the authorities of the Union Allet will understand that no disrespect was intended to them or their flag; and they repeat that if in the first instance application had been made to the captain, their wishes would have been complied with, as was done on the voyage up.

"The Directors acquit the Zouaves of intentional disrespect to the national flag, and cannot but deplore the violence they offered to the Captain.

"Further, they have determined that to avoid similar complications no party flag will in future be allowed to be hoisted on any of their steamers.

"The report is signed by Messrs. R. W. Shepherd, President; J. J. Gibb, Vice-President; and C. W. Schnieder and G. W. Simpson, Directors."

We agree, in the main, with the Directors' Report, in matter of facts, and, on several points, in matter of interpretation; but in others we beg permission to differ and to explain in what and how.

The Zouaves were not wrong in addressing themselves to an officer then in the act of commanding; but on the contrary, were perfectly justified in taking for granted, that the Company had given orders to their various officers to comply with the agreement entered into and that it only remained for the Zouaves, if they not actually asked for it, to hand their banner to any of the officers to have so simple a thing done.

The matter of interior discipline, on board the Company's vessel was, whatever view is taken of it, a matter of private arrangement between officers and their superiors, not to be settled in presence of the passengers, much less by insult-

ing the passengers and thereby causing their property to be lost.

The condemnation of Captain Simmonds' conduct is of the mildest possible kind, but we have to accept it in this form.

We agree with the Directors' Report in condemning the assault made on the Captain by a number of passengers, whether Zouaves or not: the provocation was, it is clear, a grievous one, the insult and loss inflicted of a sort to exasperate most men, still we hold that, even under such intense provocation, every one should have abstained from violence.

The Directors may well acquit the Zouaves of intentional disrespect to the national flag," for the very plain and simple reason that, not only was there no intention evinced to show disrespect to the national flag, but that nothing disrespectful was done to that flag.

The Directors end their Report with the announcement and the pledge that: "They have determined that no "party flag will in future be allowed to be hoisted on any "of their steamers." It was not however many days after, that party colours were seen on one of their vessels and that the mast of that steamer was observed adorned with a party banner, not of the most dignified nor complimentary kind, namely, with a broom attired with an orange sash or ribbon.

The signers of the present Report would not, for any consideration sustain any one of their coreligionists or con-nationalists in any action disrespectful to authority or order; they would not impute unworthy motives even to open adversaries, much less calumniate anyone; they would not on any account justify evil doings, because the perpetrators thereof should happen to belong to their creed or nationality; and, consequently, have deeply felt, with very many, the unjust manner in which this incident has been handled, by too large a portion of the community.

The undersigned sincerely believe, nay, are quite certain, that the facts reported in this pamphlet, are correctly given and that the view here taken of the occurrence is unimpeachable; their intention in giving it publicity is simply to appease those who, after having sustained insult and loss of property, instead of the courtesy and protection to which they were entitled, have been grievously misinterpreted and calumniated, and to try to impress upon those who have accused them, the conviction that they have se-

riciously erred against their neighbours and fellow countrymen.

Ottawa, 21st July 1877.

Em. TASSÉ, *Président.*

Dr. P. ST. JEAN, *Président Soc. St Jean-Baptiste.*

Alphonse BENOIT, *Président de l'Institut C. F.*

John HENEY.

G. TRUDEAU, *Président Soc. St. Pierre.*

B. SULTE, — St. Thomas.

E.G. LAVERDURE, — St. Joseph.

J. C. TACHÉ.

Eug. PANET.

Moore HIGGINS.

Joseph TASSÉ.

M. STARRS.

S. DRAPEAU.

J. F. DIONNE.

F. R. E. CAMPEAU.

H. O'REILLY.

Aug. LAPERRIÈRE.

J. A. PINARD.

C. J. HIGGINS.

Léon DAVID.

Jos. VINCENT.

J. L'ÉTOILE.

L. H. POULIOT.

P. E. RYAN.

Chas. MCCARTHY.

Peter KEARNS.

Elz. VÉSINA.

J. KREPPS.

J. C. TACHÉ, Jr., *Secrétaire.*

POSTSCRIPTUM.

Since the above was written and signed, a presentation of a medal and purse was made to the *heroic* Captain Simmonds by a number of persons. The acceptance of that offering is, as will at once be perceived, a *high compliment* paid by Captain Simmonds to his Superiors and Employers, the Directors of the Ottawa River Navigation Company, who have put on him, although in sparing words, nevertheless, a decided condemnation of his inexcusable conduct.

In order to show to what kind of justice and to what amenities, things and persons respectable and respected are subjected, under the veil of loyalty, civil and religious liberty, we reproduce here from the *Free Press* of the 30th and 31st instant, the report of the proceedings of Captain Simmonds' presentation. All that, confronted with the facts, need not be commented upon.

"THE SIMMOND'S TESTIMONIAL.

"The Presentation Yesterday—Breathings of Loyalty by Prominent Parties.

"There were about seventy-five of the contributors to the Simmonds' Testimonial present at Rowe's Hall yesterday, when the presentation was made. Among them were the following gentlemen; Messrs. A. Gibb, Amos Rowe, P. A. Egleason, James Cunningham, Robert Blackburn, M. P., Thomas Patterson, Henry Meadows, Fred Champness, W. T. R. Preston, H. H. Brennan, John Satchell, James Brewer, W. McClymont, J. H. P. Gibson, W. J. Beckett, C. C. Ray, John Smith, Alex. Jacques, sr., W. J. Mills, C. Satchell, John Keane, A. J. Parker, W. P. Lett, G. Stephens, Thos. Keane, H. W. Randolph, A. A. McDonell, Capt. Little, etc. The chair was occupied by Mr. Alex. Gibb, who acted as Chairman of the Committee.

"Captain Simmonds was introduced by Ald. Rowe, and was received with hearty cheers. After being conducted to a seat on the right of the chair, Mr. Jas. Cunningham was called to the left. The address was then read, Mr. Gibb supplementing the same by some appropriate remarks, cheers being

given on the presentation of the medal and the purse. The purse was a purple velvet one, and contained some \$300.

“ ADDRESS.

“ *To Captain Simmonds, of the Steamer “Queen Victoria.”*

“ DEAR SIR.—A number of the inhabitants of this vicinity desire to testify to you their gratification with the loyalty displayed by you in maintaining, at considerable personal risk to yourself, on the second day of July inst., on board the steamer *Queen Victoria* then under your command, the honor of the flag of the Empire to which they are all proud to belong. In common with many other loyal subjects who have taken no active part in this demonstration, they fell pleased that you administered the marked rebuke you then did to the presumptuous individuals, who, on that occasion, attempted to substitute for the glorious emblem of British supremacy, a flag which is not the symbol of anything which can command the respect of intelligent lovers of liberty, and in their own particular case if it had any significance at all, was the symbol of discomfiture and defeat. It is sincerely to be hoped that what then took place will warn all who on this free soil would be guilty of a similar offensive act that no insult to the *Meteor Flag* will be broked by the loyalists of this Confederation, who are proud of the country from which they have sprung and of the constitutional liberty which all enjoy under British institutions in this extensive Dominion.

“ You will please accept the accompanying testimonial as a small token of the appreciation of your patriotic conduct, in presenting which we sincerely hope that you will be long spared to enjoy the esteem of your fellow loyalists, and that when in due time you are called to your last account you will leave behind you worthy scions of the old stock, who emulating example of their sire, will never submit to see desecrated the noble banner which has for ages floated triumphantly in the vanguard of liberty and civilization, and in every clime wherever it has been unfurled in wrath to the breeze, on land or on sea, has been the harbinger of victory.

Ottawa, July 30th 1877.”

“ REPLY.

“ Capt. Simmonds then made the following reply :

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

“ In thanking you I deplore in a measure the circumstances that have brought me so prominently before you, circumstances still fresh in your memories and which need no comment from us. I little thought on Monday, July 2nd, of ever seeing my name in print much less of being so highly flattered; little did I think so small a spark of duty would kindle so great a flame of enthusiasm and secure for me so many true and genuine friends.

“ Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I feel that I have only done my duty, therefore do not deserve those marks of respect you have so lavishly bestowed upon me to-day. But I feel proud to meet you here, not only as friends, but as loyal subjects of Her Sovereign the Queen. I cannot find words to express my deep sense of gratitude to you all for this token of regard. May I ever prove myself worthy of it, and never forget those kind and sympathizing friends who have come forward this day to do me honor, friends dearer because formed by an act of duty. In conclusion I beg to thank you all again most sincerely for this valuable gift. May God long spare me to remember it.

May it be the means of uniting more closely that bond of fellowship which has sprung up amongst us."

"Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I feel that I have made but a poor return for the high compliments you have paid me to-day, and for this demonstration of loyalty and friendly feeling, but I do assure you that the few words I have spoken have come from the very depths of a true and grateful heart. Once more I thank you. May a life of happiness be yours, a life as happy as mine is to-day, and may this genuine token of your loyalty and appreciation of my conduct not only be an example to others, but a warning to the lawless peace disturbing mob of this Dominion, showing them by this, your noble action, that you, as loyal subjects, will never sail under false colors, and be subjects to no ruler other than Victoria our Queen. Accept again my heartfelt thanks for the generous manner in which you have supported me in the execution of my duty, and may it always be my endeavor fearlessly to uphold the honor of that dear old flag, which I hope I may never disgrace, and which is the pride of every true and free-born Briton. Allow me to set down with this conviction impressed upon my mind, that your manly and generous conduct will not only be held in everlasting remembrance by me, but be endorsed by every one whose banner in this British flag.

"Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I beg to tender you once again my sincere thanks for the honor you have conferred upon me, and to congratulate you upon your loyal and manly spirit.

"Mr. P. A. Egleason being called upon stated that the affair which took place on the 2nd of July had warmed up the latent spirit of patriotism within him. True, he believed the act a mistake on the part of those who did it, and felt that it was one which would not occur again in a hurry. (Hear, hear.) He was glad to see also many firm and true men in the country; and he congratulated Capt. Simmonds on his noble act in sustaining the honor of the British flag. (Applause.)

"Mr. Wm. P. Lett, was next called upon. He said that he had only dropped in, having been detained at the Police Court (laughter), and had no intention of making a speech. It gave him great pleasure, however, to be present where loyalists were gathered. He could say with the poet:

"Britania needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep
Her march is on the mountain wave,
Her home is on the deep."

And all over the world the flag of that contry would have to be respected. (Loud applause).

"Ald. Rowe came next. He showed why a testimonial had been gotten up for Captain Simmonds, in honor of his having done his duty. Many had wondered why he had taken such an active part in the matter, being a Canadian, but he came of good old stock which had assisted in defending the flag of our country in years gone and one felt a love for it, (applause) and it was a spirit of patriotism amongst the young people of the country that would tend to work out a grand fortune. (Applause.)

"Mr. Robt. Blackburn, M. P., had great pleasure in being present on such, an occasion, feeling that the testimonial had been deserved. He delighted in being one to do the recipient honor. (Applause.)

"Mr. Jas. Cunningham was satisfied at the result attained, which was most satisfactory. They could have obtained a greater amount of money, but the Committee did not deem it necessary, all that they desired was to show the captain that his action was endorsed by all right-thinking and loyal people. (Hear, hear.) The changing of the flags may have been a thoughtless act, but it was a most reprehensible one. (Hear, hear.) He hoped that Capt. Simmonds would long be separated to faithfully discharge his duty. (Applause.)

"Mr. Gibson said that it was the first time that he had ever been called upon to make a speech, therefore he would merely express the hope that Capt. Simmonds would long live to do his duty, and ever protect the flag of our country. (Applause.)

"Mr. Fred. Champness said that, as a diminutive member of the community, they could not expect much from him. (Laughter). He was not a maker of speeches, but when work was wanted to be done he was ready to put his shoulder to the wheel. (Hear, hear.) When anything was wanted you would most always find Fred. Champness around. (Laughter). If insults were offered the British flag at any time the people should always spring up as one man to resent it, and there would be very few occasions to occur when it would be necessary. (Cheers.) He always found that one bit at the outset often prevented any further disturbance. (Laughter and applause.)

"Mr. H. Meadows deemed that in complimenting Captain Simmonds, they had forgotten to mention Mrs. Simmonds, whom they might congratulate on having such a noble husband. (Hear, hear and applause.)

"Captain Simmonds thanked the speaker for his reference to Mrs. Simmonds.

"The Chairman then gave an address, alluding to historic scenes of old, and reviewing briefly recent events, showing that the honor of the British flag should be sustained at all hazards. He said that nothing approaching disloyalty should be allowed for a moment in any part of the country, for the liberty that all enjoyed was due to the institutions under which we lived, and was represented by the British flag. He alluded to the flag difficulty, in a humorous train; and said that there had been too much sitting idly by. He deemed that the Navigation Company's report in regard to the matter was a general "white-wash" one.

"The meeting then broke up with cheers for Captain Simmonds and for the Queen.

"An adjournment was made to the London restaurant, where a festive time was spent in toasts and speeches.

"Mr. John Rochester was unavoidably detained from being present at the presentation meeting, but arrived a little later.

"The medal was a massive gold one, manufactured by Mr. Jas. Leslie the engraving being done by Mr. Geo. Cox. On the back was a representation of the Union Jack, the inscription on the face being as follows:— "Presented by loyalists of Ottawa to Captain Thos. Simmonds, for his patriotism in maintaining the honor of the British flag on board the steamer Queen Victoria, 2nd July, 1877." On the medal clasp are the words, "For Loyalty."



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